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21 December 1963

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence
SUBJECT: Final Report on CORONA Management

1. I have examined the CORONA program in some detail for nearly two months, in response to McMillan's proposal for a change in the CORONA management. My study has been broad enough and deep enough to support the following convictions:

a. I can find no basis for assuming that the proposed change will either improve or continue the daily health of the current N and J CORONA system.

b. The new management does not provide any real capability for conceiving or developing improved search capabilities.

c. The change will not provide a full time CORONA Program Director responsive to the DMRG and national needs. Rather it will subordinate the existing SSD Project Office to General Greer who has many other program responsibilities.

d. The proposal will grant a real monopoly on satellite reconnaissance [redacted] and will soon standardize procurement and development among all the contractors [redacted]

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e. You have an alternative solution which meets the basic needs of CORONA in a more direct way and within the present framework of NRO.

f. The alternate solution is to create a new Program E within NRO to be responsible fully and directly to the DMRG for the present CORONA, its

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improvements, and the development of its successors.

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g. I believe that CIA can effectively manage and staff such a program in a way that will enhance the performance of CORONA and ensure its improvement.

h. However, you should know that McMillan will violently oppose any modification of his original proposal, as he is now thoroughly committed before his staff, General Greer and the contractors to turning CORONA over to Greer. It may be just as easy to modify NRO itself as to reverse Brock on this point.

i. However, we are ourselves at a turning point in the NRO and there is no honorable way to lose this one. If we agree to the CORONA transfer, I predict we will never re-enter the satellite field in a meaningful way again.

j. The prospect is not pleasant, but the conflict has been forced upon us by aggressive exploitation of the original NRO agreement.

2. The following pages explore these points in some detail and give one much of the relevant background. It will be difficult to go farther than I have here without visiting ITAK, GE and especially the West Coast facilities. John Bross and I plan to visit ITAK on 23 December and could continue on to the West Coast between Christmas and New Year's.

3. It is recommended that you reject McMillan's proposal in favor of the [redacted] approach. If you concur, I will draft appropriate letters to Gilpatrick and McMillan along the lines you may suggest.

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ALBERT D. WHEELON
Deputy Director
(Science and Technology)

Attachment

As stated

cc: General Carter
Mr. Bross

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